

Daytona Beach
and Environs

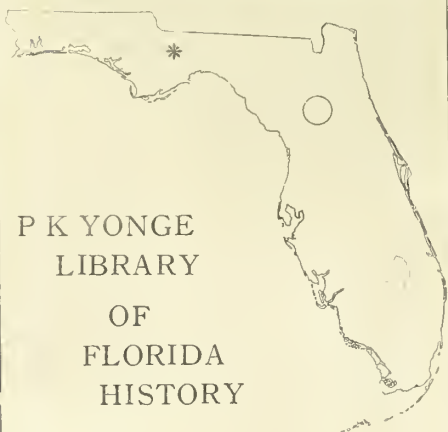
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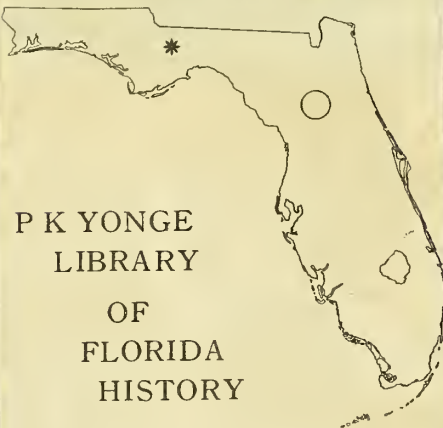


DAYTONA BEACH AND ENVIRONS
Interview with Mattie M. Jackson

Writers Program. Florida

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HISTORY

ch-fps - Mrs. Mattie Jackson
May 10, 1939;
Mrs. Mattie Jackson, (81)
Volusia County Pioneer
"The Cedars"
Daytona Beach, Florida.
(Cedar-st. Bet. Beach
and Palmetto-sts.)

Rose Shepherd, Writer.

MRS. MATTIE JACKSON

first hand
F. 2
D. 27
W. J.
Mrs. Jackson, considered the most reliable source of the authentic history of this section of Volusia County, was interviewed at her home - "The Cedars" - a formerly prosperous tourist hotel, the appointment having been made by Mr. Fitzgerald, publisher of the Daytona Beach Observer. Mrs. Jackson answered the bell. She is a slight woman, barely five feet tall, and weighs a little over one hundred pounds. She moves and talks quickly, but without nervousness.

"Yes, I am a pioneer," she said simply, "and about the only one left of the early settlers.

"I was born January 21, 1858, in Bodney, a small town near Williamsport, Pennsylvania. My father was J. C. Maley, a Dutch emigrant, while my mother was of Irish ancestry. I was the eldest of a family of five children.

"In the early part of 1867, Mr. J. D. Mitchell, a neighbor of ours, made a trip to Florida in search of a milder climate and a business location in this frontier country, and found what he desired at Ronce Park, later known as Port Orange, on the Halifax Peninsula, where about a year before Dr. J. M. Hawks had established a sawmill. This section at that time had marvelous stands of live oaks. Having made arrangements with Dr. Hawks to work at the saw-

mill, he returned to Pennsylvania, persuading my father to accompany him back with his wife and two children. I was eight years of age at this time.

"We embarked on a steamer at Baltimore for savannah, which we reached in the course of eight days after having been considerably tossed about by a severe storm. At savannah we boarded the steamer Darlington, coming through the second stage of our journey on the inland waterway to Fernandina, to Jacksonville, then via the St. Johns to Enterprise, (now known as Benson Springs). We spent the night there very comfortably at the Brock House, owned by Jacob Brock, an early St. Johns River Steamboat Captain. The steamboat Darlington was one of a line of river boats he also owned and operated. The next day we went by wagon trail to New Smyrna and from there to our destination on the Halifax Peninsula to Ponce Park, about six miles north of here. Two weeks had elapsed since we left our home in Pennsylvania.

"The sawmill never was a success as a business venture, because it was too difficult to market the lumber -- they had to depend on intermittent schooners to carry the cargo to coastwise ports. They were none too sturdy, and more than one was beached in heavy storms, or wrecked by the heavy lumber shifting causing the boats to capsize, so that many months of work and effort became a prey to the angry ocean, with no financial return. However, these pioneers were hardy and persistent, and in the next few years three more families had been added to the settlement, and Dr. Hawks established the post office, which he named Port Orange, on account of the groves which were being set out in



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this section and also the prevalence of many of the ^{native} /sour orange trees. Dr. Hawks claimed that a letter simply addressed 'Port Orange,' would be delivered promptly to this Florida post office, as it was the only one so named in the entire United States. In a year or so Dr. Hawks abandoned the sawmill business, leaving this locality and founding the town of Hawks Point, now known as Edgewater, farther down the coast. He wrote a most authentic history of this section, now out of print, entitled 'The East Coast of Florida.' Mr. Fitzgerald, who has authored a most creditable history of Volusia County, has my copy of Dr. Hawks' book, from which he used a good many excerpts, and I must get it back, as I would not part with it for anything.

"One day early in 1870 my father happened to be in Enterprise (the 'Cherry Ann' in command of Captain A. N. Hague) when the steamboat arrived from Jacksonville with a passenger who was to become famous as the developer of this territory - a Mr. Day, of Mansfield, Ohio. He was looking for a location to establish a colony. He drove over to Port Orange with my father, spending a week or so in our home, during which he and father went up and down the Halifax River looking for a likely spot for the location of the proposed colony. This section right here, a part of the old Williamson Grant of Spanish days, was finally selected, and in the fall of 1870 Daytona - named for Mr. Day, of Mansfield, Ohio, and not for the town of Dayton, Ohio, as is sometimes erroneously stated - was established with nine families from the Ohio city.

"During the summer Mr. Day erected a sawmill nearby, had lumber cut, and built a large building out of this native product of his mill, naming it the 'Colony House' in which the colonists were to

live until they were able to get settled in their own homes. Since then we have always had a hotel of some sort in Daytona called the 'Colony House.' Mrs. Mary Hoyt bought the original, changed the name to the 'Palmetto House' and operated it as a small hotel, the first hostelry by the way, of Volusia County. It burned down about twelve years ago, everything being totally destroyed. The building was vacant at the time, and it is supposed the fire was started by tramps or other vagrants sleeping temporarily in the building. It seems too bad, as it was such a famous landmark and connecting link with the early days.

"Mr. Day and my father became firm friends, and a year later he induced my father to leave Port Orange which had become almost depopulated after the decline of the local sawmill, so in 1871 we came to Daytona.

"I forgot to say that Dr. Hawks' company was called the Florida Land and Lumber company, and the sawmill was known as the Port Orange Mills. There were a few negro laborers who came down with the mills. After Dr. Hawks' departure, the post office was discontinued, and the name given to another post office six miles south of here, previously known as 'McDaniels.' So the original Port Orange and the present town of that name, were really twelve miles apart.

"In the meantime, our old Pennsylvania neighbor, Mr. Mitchell, bought an orange grove at Oak Hill below New Smyrna, and located there.

"Daytona prospered from the first. Mr. Day was a fine businessman, a good manager, and seemed to think of everything. My father built a splendid home for that period right on the corner of this street - Cedar Street and what is now Beach Avenue. The building was constructed of lumber from the local mill.

"The next year, Captain Swift, a contractor for the United States government, came down from New Bedford, Massachusetts, with a crew of between four and five hundred men - liveoak cutters. The government had some sort of a contract, perhaps such as is known as 'timber rights,' for the Williamson grant. Large saw-mills were established, and this army of men busied themselves for a number of years during the fall and winter period in cutting and sawing into lumber the liveoak timber for government ship-building. The men lived in camps, and Captain Swift operated a commissary from which they obtained their food supplies.

"My father worked at anything he could get to do. He was a carpenter, also a blacksmith, and between the two trades he kept fairly busy. Then, too, he set out an orange grove, which he tended himself, selling the fruit at fair prices. Like the other early settlers, he had to adapt himself to many situations when it came to earning a living in this new country. If he had been like some people today, with only one trade, we would have had a hard time getting along.

"The first school was established in 1872, taught by J. W. Smith. His daughter, Bertha, (Mrs. Charles Smith - she married a man of the same name) is still living here. She is a few years older than I, and is the only one of the early settlers besides myself ~~stlling~~ living here. Her grandson is R. L. Smith.

"Among the other residents when we came here were: Riley Peck and family, the Walkers, the Burdicks, Captain R. H. McIntyre, Arthur West; an Englishman, John Trist and his family, Dr. Coleman and his family, with Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Coleman's father. Mr. Chamberlain, a botanist, had a place with greenhouses on Beach

Street where he had a splendid collection of native Florida plants and flowers. It was just a hobby with him, as he never pretended to commercialize on his collection.

"Then there was Mr. Day's cousin, Calvin Day, with his two sons, Mattie and Loomis - Loomis Avenue is named for one son.

"Mr. George Woodruff was another early settler, and George and Charley Super, with their sister, Mrs. Townsend - all from Ohio.

"Mrs. Zelia King Swett, of New Smyrna, is a descendant of one of the Pioneer families - the Sheldons - who went from Port Orange to that section. She is a great-granddaughter of Mrs. Sheldon and has lots of historical data. Mrs. E. K. Loud, daughter of Mrs. Sheldon, is also living.

"William King was another early settler, he was a bachelor. On the other side of the river was J. H. Botephus, another of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

"My husband, William Jackson, was a native of Glasgow, Scotland. He came to Jacksonville in 1872, and was a bookkeeper for John Clarke, operating a general merchandise and liquor store on Bay Street, serving mostly as a ship chandler, as the Jacksonville harbor was alive with steamboats in those days, and he had a good business. He lived with the Clarke family on Newnan Street. He knew Judge John Locke Doggett, and others of the pioneer families of Jacksonville.

"Mr. Jackson came to Daytona early in 1875 and he and I were married that same year. We had a big wedding, everybody came, and we all had a good time. No, they did not charivari us, but there was a wedding dinner and champagne and plenty to eat. We lived with my father's family for seven years, until we built this home

here in the middle of the block on Cedar Street, adjoining my father's place on the corner of Beach Street. When we went to housekeeping, my mother gave me my sister, Esther, the youngest, and twin of my brother John. Maley. She said, 'You can have her, as we have so many others to take care of.' Esther has been a great help and of much comfort to me during the long years past. There she sits, always busy at something," she said, directing her eyes to a slender white-haired woman sewing by the window in the adjoining room.

"Mr. William P. Burr had the first store in Daytona. He died shortly after my husband and I were married in 1875, and Mr. Jackson bought it, operating it for a great many years. He carried general merchandise, dry goods, boots, shoes, hardware, groceries and provisions of all kinds.

"My husband became prominent in the business affairs of the city, was on the school board, a member of the board of city commissioners, and was postmaster when he died in 1917. Mt mother was postmistress first, he acting as her deputy, and when she passed on, he became postmaster? We had five daughters - two dying in infancy. I remember my youngest daughter, Isabel, saying one day to a visitor who patted her on the head and asked if she had any brothers, and she answered: "No, sir, just us three girls, and not a boy among 'em." Isabel died the same year as my husband, and another daughter two years later. Madeline, a clerk in the Daytona Book and Stationery Store, 232 South Beach Street, is the only one of my children left.

"Here is a picture of the first store Mr. Jackson owned," she said, returning from the bookcase with a bundle of faded photographs. "And this is the one he built a few years later - a much larger building. On the second floor was a hall where all celebrations were held, in fact, it was

the only place in the 1880's where public gatherings could be accommodated. The first Masonic lodge was organized and met here regularly for many years.

"You may be interested in this - the menu of the banquet tendered the officials of the St. Johns and Halifax River Railroad on December 2, 1886, upon the extension of the line to this point."

SOUP

Oxtail

ROAST

Turkey stuffed - Cranberry sauce

Kentucky Mutton - Caper sauce

New York beef - Dish Gravy

Volusia County Bear

VEGETABLES

Mashed potatoes - Baked sweet potatoes - squash - Turnips - Beets

Parsnips - Carrots - Stewed tomatoes - East Coast

Green peas

ENTRES

Oysters Raw - Tongue - Cold Ham

RELISHES

Celery - Lettuce - Radishes - Pickles - Jellies

PASTRY AND DESSERT

Vanilla icecream - Roman icecream - Oranges - Apples, - Nuts

Bananas - Coffee - Tea

(Printed by the Halifax Printing Company).

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"One thing not on the menu, of which there was the greatest abundance, was champagne. It was quite a big affair.

"The St. Johns and Halifax River Railroad later became an important link in the Florida East Coast - or Flagler system.

"At the time of the banquet, an ice factory had been in operation here for a short time previous. It was established by a Mr. Bush in 1885 on North Beach street. Before that, Mr. Jackson supplied the town's requirements by having ice shipped by schooner daily from Jacksonville. People learned quickly to make and freeze icecream, which was always a feature at picnics and parties. I do not know just what the 'Roman' cream was, listed on the menu, unless it was flavored with Italian wine.

"This is a picture of the old Colony House; and this is the Ocean view, a later hotel, incorporated now in the Prince George. This is Mr. Jackson's old store, and this the new one, which he sold the day before he died. This is the first home of my father, J. C. Maley, on the corner of Beach and Cedar street. This is my husband's pleasure boat, the steamer S. B. White, which used to run between here and the Indian River. It was too early, however for such large water craft to be popular, and in 1898 he sold it to the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railroad, for use in their service at Key West.

"All these photographs were made by E. G. Harris, the first photographer to locate in Daytona. Mr. Harris has passed away, but his daughter, Miss Celia Harris, still lives here and may have other early pictures of this section.

"Wait until I get my other glasses - I have never had bifocals, as I never thought I would like them - so I use the separate reading glasses - and I'll see if I can't locate an old paper.

"Yes, here it is - the Sunday Daytona Beach News Journal, February 19, 1928, giving a write-up of the first train into Daytona Beach - this was when they held the celebration and banquet in December, 1886 - with some of the old photographs illustrating the article.

"You can see in this picture of Mr. Jackson's first store how close it was to the river, with a rowboat beached right in front. That was the way we used to travel in the early days. Each family had a boat, and they used to row up and down the river on business and to visit each other. Some had sailboats. We went to the beach in our boats, as there were only sand trails over the peninsula, and it was hard going to drive there.

"We had good times in the old days - we were all on the same social level, and financially, too. There were no cliques or clans, everybody was sociable, one could not afford to be 'high-hat' as it meant isolation. Life was not so complicated, and people did not have so much to worry about as they do now. Politicians and grafters had not come into the picture, gambling and other vices were taboo. Our wants were simple, our pleasures were wholesome, and our parties and dances were grand! We enjoyed picnics on the beach, carrying our lunches over with us in the rowboats.

"There was always plenty to eat, but sometimes not a great variety. In some seasons we would run completely out of wheat flour,, but there was always corn to be had. Each family had a small grist mill, the corn was ground and sifted, the finer part being used for bread-making, and the grits for chicken feed. If we had no coffee, we parched corn and wheat and brewed that to drink.

tea we made by steeping bay leaves. There were always vegetables, and we raised quantities of sweet potatoes. Seafood - fish, crabs and shrimp, were plentiful, and occasionally we had oysters. Venison was not rare, and sometimes we had bear meat. Then once in a while a settler would kill a beef and we had to divide it up among the different families so it could be used right away, since we had no ice, and refrigeration was unknown then.

"Women sewed and knit and made the family's clothing. I have made almost every garment worn by men, women, or children. We would get dry goods - cotton, gingham, sheeting - by the bolt, making it into clothing and household furnishing. We would get jeans and tailor's supplies and make coats, vests, and pants for the men and boys. We would take the palmetto bud, bleach it, cut it into strips and braid it, and mother would fashion it into hats by sewing it into strips. Men, women and children wore these, they were comfortable and most serviceable.

"Captain Swift, when the winter's work was completed, would ship the liveoak timber north to the United States Navy yard at Norfolk - I have seen ten or twelve large schooners anchored here in the Halifax River loading this lumber aboard. Then before he would leave with his several hundred helpers, he would close out the commissary, and the settlers would be able to purchase quantities of dried and smoked meat, flour, salt, casks or half barrels or mackerel, and other food supplies at very reasonable rates. Schooners would dock at Enterprise, coming from Sanford or Jacksonville with groceries and dry goods, but it was forty miles to Enterprise and a long hard trip in those days to go shopping. I remember one time we started in a wagon which broke down and we finished the journey in a borrowed cart.

"The weather was about the same then as now - I do not see any difference in the climate. I remember one very cold winter when we lived at Ponce Park, or Port Orange.

"The mosquitoes were always bad, but we had nets. The sandflies, however, were the most annoying, and every family had to supply its beds with nets of real fine mesh, called sandfly netting, as a protection.

"There was a great deal of sickness -chills and fevers, and there were one or two deaths from yellow fever. We had poor drinking water, just dug wells or surface water, but later on artesian wells were bored, and as soon as flowing wells were established, the health of the community began to improve.

"Dr. Coleman was the first physician. He was here when we came, and later a Dr. Gordon located in Daytona, but he did not stay long, returning to Ohio.

"In the early 1890's, Dr. G. A. Klock built the first hospital, a private one. It is small, but is still in existence.

"The Halifax General Hospital is more recent, and is probably larger than our requirements call for even now.

"The first newspaper was the Halifax Journal, established in the early 1880's by Mr. F. A. Mann.

"The first cemetery was out on Ridgewood Avenue. Mr. J. W. Smith, the first school teacher here, entered a homesite in that section, and when a little daughter of his died she was buried on the place. The plot was set aside as a community burying ground and called 'Memento'. Most of the early settlers were buried there when they passed away. It is now called 'Pinewood,' and is nearly completely filled.

"There were two log houses in this section when we came here in 1871. One was on Beach Street, and the other was farther down where Rue's store now is located, and it was used as a store building.

"We had storms during the equinoctial period then, the same as now, but this section has never suffered so severely as Palm Beach and Miami.

"I remember ~~one~~ terrible storm on August 16, 1871, always referred to as the 'Ladona Storm' because a steamer named Ladona went ashore that night at Cape Canaveral. It was bound from New York to Galveston. The merchants of the Texas city had been to the north and made their winter stock purchases, which were loaded in the ill-fated ship for delivery. When the tide went out the ship was high and dry on the Cape, considerably damaged, but without loss of life to her Captain and crew. Word soon spread through the east coast section of the wreck, and all the wagons and teams possible to secure were headed towards the point. Ladders were placed up the sides of the ship, and people just helped themselves to quantities of hats, boots, shoes, and bolts of dry goods - shirting, dress goods, bleached and unbleached muslin, etc.

"Yes, maybe if we had had the cross-state canal at that time the ship would have been able to ride out the storm and save its valuable cargo of merchandise. Well, I hope Florida gets this canal. There seems to be a difference of opinion as to whether it would damage our splendid supply of water from flowing wells, but experts have testified both for and against this question, so its commercial value to Florida and other Gulf states in the

matter of convenience and money saving in shipping may offset other objectionable conditions.

"No, there were no Indians in this section when we located here in 1867. Many of the old plantations had been abandoned during the Seminole War period - this old Williamson Grant was one of them - and the Indians had been taken either to the Indian Territory or those who refused to go, had taken up residence in the Everglades of Florida. I remember once seeing two Seminoles on the train going in to Jacksonville where they were to take part in the Exposition, as one of the attractions there.

"This house was built by my husband in 1882 and we have lived here since. It is really a small hotel, and has always been known as 'The Cedars' named by my husband for the cedars which formerly grew in the yard and were planted along the front walk. It afforded us a splendid living/ for twenty years, or until the beach side was developed, when people started going over there, so as to be near the ocean. I closed my dining room two years ago. We have several permanent roomers, and have changed the back of the house into small apartments for which there is ready demand, and occasionally have tourists for a short time. But times have changed - people do not want to eat where they sleep, and do not want to stay anywhere over a night or so. The automobile has brought this change, and they park and eat in drug stores, or in the 5-and10¢ stores, or at wagons or filling stations along the road. They take their meals just wherever they happen to be.

"And I don't ever want to see another boom. It gave Florida such a bad name and ruined so many people. Some of our friends sold their property on a down payment, and what they considered an enormous return on their investment, but after the new owners

had occupied the property for a few years, they were unable to carry on, and the property went back to the original owners. The furnishings were worn out or destroyed, the property in bad repair, the taxes unpaid - it was terrible. One man told me it cost him \$5,000 to restore his place to its former condition.

"My daughter and I spent the summer of 1924 in the north, and we had frantic telegrams one after another from an excited real estate operator to name a price on our home, but we steadfastly refused and I have been glad a hundred times that we did not bargain to sell it then, although it is a question now what to do with a three-story house with such large rooms.

"My daughter and I, when the slump came the second year afterwards, lost all our money in the Daytona bank failure - our savings which had been put aside to take care of us in later years. It was pretty hard sledding for a while, but we have managed to get along, and one thing, we have never lost faith in our neighbors nor in Daytona Beach as a place to live. Our financial disasters were caused, for the most part, by total outsiders and speculators.

"Before you go, I want you to come with me to the back yard and see our Royal Palm, the only one here."

We went through the large living room, down the hall, and through a screened-in porch to where the backyard with its many trees, vines and flowers could be seen, and there by the kitchen, on the southeast side of the house, where it would be protected from the cold north winds, a tall Royal Palm reared its smooth, polished body thirty feet upwards, extending beyond the high roof.

"Twenty-five years ago a friend brought it to my daughter, Isabel, from Miami. It was a tiny little plant in a flower pot. It outgrew the pot and we put it in a bucket, it outgrew the bucket

and we placed it in a tub. Then when the tub got too heavy to lift, we just set it out in the yard, and there it had grown to our wonder and delight. Sometimes the leaves freeze in winter, but new ones come out in the spring. A decayed spot developed, as you see, on a limb with the eaves of the house, but we had a tree surgeon come and patch it up, and now it seems as strong as ever.

"And did you ever see anything like this wisteria?" she queried, calling attention to a pergola next door covered with a special imported species of Japanese wisteria. "You will have to come upstairs to get a good view."

Back along the porch, through the hall, up the narrow stairs to the second-floor hall, and out through a screened-in sleeping porch - a duplicate of the one downstairs - to the side of the house, where on glancing down we beheld the top of the pergola a solid mass of green vine and dark-to-light-purple blooms like an arm bouquet a foot across.

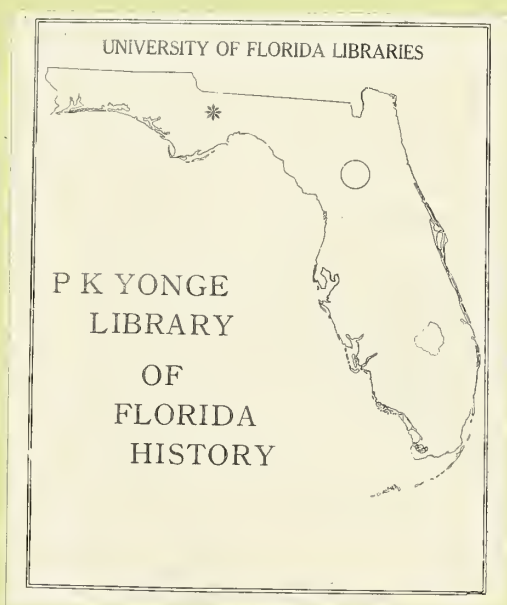
" 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever,' " quoted Mrs. Jackson. "It's a marvelous plant, and I never get tired of looking at it."

As we said goodbye, she said: "I wish I had kept a diary, I had plenty of time, and it would have helped me now to verify dates. I used to have a good memory, but in later years I am not so sure of myself. I know that tomorrow I will remember a lot of interesting things I might have told you, so if you think of any other questions, just let me know and I'll be glad to give any other information possible."

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